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LETTER DATED 22 APRIL 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF LEBANON TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

I have the honour to enclose herewith a letter addressed to you by Mr. Fares Bouez, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lebanon (see annex).

I have the honour to request that the present letter and its annex be circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Samir MOUBARAK
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

[Original: Arabic]

Letter dated 21 April 1998 from the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Lebanon addressed to the President of the Security Council

The Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed a letter to you dated 6 April 1998, to which was annexed the text of the decisions adopted by the Ministerial Committee for National Security of the Government of Israel on the acceptance by Israel of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), and requested circulation of the letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

I should like to inform you of the position adopted by the Government of Lebanon in this regard.

This document, apart from the media statements issued by the Israeli Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, represents the first official position declared by Israel. However, it was issued not by the Government, but by the Committee for National Security, part of the Government. The Israeli Government itself has not yet issued any clear statement as to its position.

First: The Lebanese Government is convinced of the need to implement the spirit and letter of Security Council resolution 425 (1978), as confirmed by resolution 426 (1978), the executive instrument for the first resolution.

Resolution 425 (1978) is quite clear and unambiguous. The Security Council calls upon Israel immediately to withdraw its forces from all Lebanese territory. No stages are provided for such a withdrawal to the internationally recognized boundaries.

The Security Council attached no security or political conditions to the implementation of this resolution. It provided for no negotiations and allowed Israel no gains or security guarantees at the expense of Lebanese sovereignty. The Government of Lebanon therefore calls upon the Security Council, which adopted the resolution, and Israel, the occupying Power, to implement this resolution as it stands, without attaching any conditions thereto that would change its nature or goals.

Second: The aforementioned letter and the statements made to the media, despite Israeli Government claims to the contrary, do attach a number of conditions to implementation which, if complied with, would fundamentally alter resolutions 425 (1978) and 426 (1978). Such amendments would alter not only the legal and political structure of resolution 425 (1978), but its entire purpose.

The Israeli Government's call for negotiations with the Lebanese Government with a view to putting in place security arrangements and guarantees is merely intended to drag Lebanon into negotiations that will be used to establish the impossibility of implementing the above-mentioned resolution, and to invalidate its clear and unequivocal binding nature. The intention is also to link the

resolution to numerous prerequisites, contrary to the meaning of the resolution. Israel's intention is to remove all the content from the resolution, just as it has done with the Oslo Accords on the Palestinian track, and just as it has reneged on guarantees on the Syrian track.

For Lebanon to accept the principle of negotiating with regard to any resolution adopted by the Security Council, the highest international authority, would bring into question the legitimacy of such resolutions, and would certainly be viewed by Israel as an indication that Lebanon was giving way on the content of the resolution. This would justify its abrogation.

The Israeli Government's purpose in making these proposals is not to implement this resolution, but rather to use it as a basis for negotiations with Lebanon on the 17 May 1983 agreement. The proposals make clear Israel's intentions: there are numerous conditions relating to the role of the Israeli militia, restricting the role of the Lebanese army, and generally violating Lebanese sovereignty over its own territory.

Israel's second goal, after exacting the principle of negotiation, is to exact the principle of security arrangements and guarantees, however obscure, in order to give Israel the right to impose its own interpretation thereof. Failure to reach agreement on these will lead to implementation of resolution 425 (1978) being frozen. Not only would these measures be used to claim that Lebanon had abandoned sovereignty over its own territory, but if Lebanon accepts them, other Arab parties would subsequently have to accept imposition of the same concepts.

Third: These proposals must be placed in the current political context by noting how the Israeli Prime Minister has dealt with the peace process. After announcing his intention to change the equation of land for peace, and to re-interpret Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the Israeli Prime Minister used a two-pronged approach in order to negate the substance of the political issues while using the media to improve his own political image and conceal his intransigence and his determination that the peace process should fail.

Through its commitment to international resolutions, Lebanon insists not only on preserving its own higher interests, as is its right and duty, but on its respect for the credibility of international legitimacy. It also affirms the principle that a Member State of the United Nations such as Israel should not tinker with those resolutions to suit its own domestic or international situation. The Government of Israel is attempting to distort resolution 425 (1978), exploiting the international balance of power to that end, and with a view to destroying the comprehensive peace process and distracting attention from the lack of progress made on the remaining tracks.

The parties to the other tracks can have no confidence that the Government of Israel, which calls for negotiations where there should be none, for example with respect to resolution 425 (1978), and refuses to negotiate when it should, on resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), will make any proposals that are innocent of political, legal or media considerations.

Fourth: Lebanon entered the peace process on the basis of implementation of resolution 425 (1978), and on the understanding that negotiations would be held to achieve a just, lasting and comprehensive peace on the basis of resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973). It affirms that it is still pledged to this peace process and its principles.

Any negotiations between Lebanon and Israel can only be on subjects relating to resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), Arab rights, the situation of the city of Al-Quds, the rights of the Palestinian refugees and a future framework for peaceful relations. Negotiations must be resumed at the point they had previously reached.

Lebanon is bound by ties of solidarity to the whole Arab world, and in particular to the Syrian Arab Republic, to which it is bound by an agreement on the need for a comprehensive settlement and for rejection of any policy of separation and division such as is practised by Israel.

Security, stability and true peace can be achieved only through the peace process. If this collapses, the region will be drawn into struggles whose consequences are difficult to predict.

I hope that we are in agreement with regard to this issue, since we always depend on your support. We are all concerned to uphold international law, without which international relations cannot be sustained. I stress that if Israel succeeds in its attempts to put pressure on the Security Council with a view to amending resolutions adopted by that body and making them more amenable to Israel's ambitious plans, the pillars of the Security Council, its credibility and continuity, will be destroyed along with international legitimacy, which will change in accordance with the prevailing balance of power. We therefore depend upon your determination that resolutions should be implemented in letter and spirit as adopted. They must not be distorted or divested of their true content.

(Signed) Fares BOUEIZ
Minister for Foreign Affairs